"Setting up a Task force to check pollution"

1430. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Chairman of the Central Pollution Control Board has reiterated the need for setting up a Task Force to check pollution in the country;

(b) if so, whether assistance from voluntary organisations, SPCBs and financial institutions has also been sought to check pollution; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (CAPT. JAI NARAIN PRASAD NISHAD): (a) Yes Sir. The Chairman of the Central Pollution Control Board has reiterated the need for setting up a Task Force to check pollution in the country during a Conference of Chairman and Members Secretaries of Pollution Control Boards/Committees held at Delhi in February 1996.

(b) and (c) Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has set up an NGO Cell to involve people and non-governmental organisations for abatement of Pollution. The State Pollution Control Boards have also been advised to set up similar cells in their respective States. The initiatives taken to encourage public participation to control pollution include the following:

— A Pollution Awareness and Assistance Centre (PAAC) has been set up for priority participatory programmes on prevention and control of pollution;

— Periodic interaction meeting between the pollution control authrities and non-governmental organisations are held at regional level;

— Water testing Kits are distributed among various NGOs and science students to undertake water quality assessment;

— Quarterly Newsletter "PARIVESH" is published by Central Pollution Control Board to provide information about various techniques of pollution abatement to the public;

— A concession is provided on the CPCB publications to those NGOs who are enlisted for pollution control activities.

Public Expenditure on Education

1431. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the time-frame within which the objective of raising public expenditure on education to 6 percent of gross domestic product is proposed to be achieved; and

(b) the allocation of this targeted higher outlay between the primary, secondary and higher stages of education?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MUHI RAM SAIKIA): (a) and (b) Government intends to earmark by the year 2000, 6 percent of the country's gross domestic product for education. 50% of these funds will be spent on primary education.

Conversion of Metre Gauge Lines to broad Gauge Lines

1432. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the length of metre gauge lines that existed in India five years back;

(b) the progress made during these years in the conversion of metre gauge